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SOVIET ENERGY CONCERNS

ANNCR:

LIKE MANY COUNTRIES IN THE WEST, THE SOVIET UNION IS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT WASTING ENERGY. HERE IS A BACKGROUND REPORT FROM VOA CORRESPONDENT BILL MARSH AT OUR EUROPEAN BUREAU.

VOICE:

IT WAS THE COMMUNIST PARTY DAILY "PRAVDA" THAT RAISED THE ISSUE -- AND NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME -- IMPLORING CITIZENS TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE NATION'S VALUABLE GAS, OIL AND COAL RESERVES. THE ARTICLE, APPEARING ON PAGE ONE IN LATE SEPTEMBER, SAID THAT FUEL RESERVES WERE BEING USED WITHOUT RESTRAINT AT MANY FACTORIES AND CONSTRUCTION SITES.

ALTHOUGH THE WORD "CRISIS" IS AVOIDED IN SOVIET MEDIA, IT'S CLEAR THAT ENERGY USE -- OR MISUSE -- IS A MATTER OF SUBSTANTIAL CONCERN IN THE KREMLIN. ALTERNATE SOURCES OF ENERGY ARE BEING SOUGHT, AND THE COUNTRY IS PUSHING AHEAD WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS AND BREEDER REACTORS. ONE MAJOR PROJECT INVOLVES THE CONSTRUCTION OF WINDMILLS, AND IT'S BEEN PROJECTED THAT BY THE END OF THE 1980S A STRING OF WINDMILLS WILL CROSS A GOOD PART OF THE ARCTIC COASTLINE, GENERATING AS MUCH POWER AS FOUR LARGE NUCLEAR PLANTS.

THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES DO NOT HAVE THE AMERICAN PROBLEM OF TENS OF MILLIONS OF FUEL HUNGRY PRIVATE AUTOMOBILES, BUT THERE ARE APPARENTLY OTHER PROBLEMS -- PROBLEMS LINKED TO INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AND INEFFICIENT USE OF FUELS.

ALTHOUGH SOVIET OIL PRODUCTION ROSE FIVE PERCENT LAST YEAR, IT'S NOTED THAT THIS WAS THE LOWEST PERCENTAGE INCREASE SINCE 1970. IT WAS FAR BELOW THE ANNUAL AVERAGE INCREASE SINCE 1960 OF EIGHT-POINT-ONE PERCENT.

AN UNKNOWN FACTOR IS THE AMOUNT OF OIL HELD IN SOVIET RESERVES. ALSO UNKNOWN IS THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO PRODUCE AND EXPORT OIL OVER A LONGER TERM, SAY TEN OR TWENTY YEARS. BUT IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE SOVIET UNION RECOGNIZES LONG-TERM OIL PRODUCTION AS A PROBLEM, HENCE THE DIRECTIVES THAT INDUSTRY CUT DOWN ON WASTE.

THE U.S. CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, IN A REPORT ON THE WORLD'S ABILITY TO SUPPLY OIL, PAINTS A GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC PICTURE WORLDWIDE, AND THE SOVIET UNION IS NOT EXCLUDED FROM THIS PICTURE. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, THE SOVIET UNION WILL HAVE TO IMPORT THREE-AND-A-HALF TO FOUR-AND-A-HALF MILLION BARRELS A DAY BY 1985 TO SUPPLY ITS OWN NEEDS AND THAT OF ITS EAST EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS. CURRENTLY, THE SOVIET UNION IS EXPORTING ONE MILLION BARRELS A DAY.

THE POSSIBLITY OF THE SOVIET UNION BECOMING A NET OIL IMPORTER BY 1985 IS NOT ACCEPTED BY ALL ANALYSTS. THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY STILL BE ABLE TO EXPORT SOME OIL IN 1985, ALTHOUGH THE O-E-C-D SEES EAST EUROPE AS A WHOLE BEING AN OIL-DEFICIT AREA BY THAT TIME.

WHATEVER XHE CASE, TIME IS CLEARLY RUNNING OUT FOR ALL OIL CONSUMERS, AND THE APPEAL IN PRAVDA IS EVIDENCE THAT THIS TRUISM IS RECOGNIZED IN THE SOVIET UNION.

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